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## COHERENCE IN HETEROGENEOUS TEXTS FROM SENTENCES TO SEQUENCES OF SENTENCES

الانسجام في النصوص اللانجانسة من الجمل إلى المقاطع

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## COHERENCE IN HETEROGENEOUS TEXTS FROM SENTENCES TO SEQUENCES OF SENTENCES

الانسجام في النصوص اللامتناسية من الجمل إلى المقاطع

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### **Abstract:**

Text coherence is one of the seven criteria of textuality which has relation with the perception of text content by the reader/ listener in its appropriate context. A text is considered coherent when the sentences of which it is composed, are semantically related. The aim of this article is to identify some aspects of coherence in heterogeneous texts; it means semantic and pragmatic relations between typed sequences of sentences, as defined by Jean-Michel Adam, in both theoretical and practical studies. The results showed that it is possible to study coherence in heterogeneous texts through the analysis of their sequential structure. We also found that sequences of different types (narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository or conversational) can be related semantically through relations such as repetition, individual identity, moving from general to particular and whole-part relations.

**Key words:** coherence, semantic relation, sequential structure, text typology, textual heterogeneity, textual organization plans.

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### ملخص:

يعتبر الانسجام أحد المعايير النصية المرتبطة بعملية تلقي النص ضمن سياق معين، بحيث يقاس انسجام نص ما من خلال الترابط الدلالي بين جملته. نحاول في هذا المقال دراسة الانسجام النصي في النصوص اللامتجانسة تركيبياً، بهدف إيجاد العلاقات الدلالية والتداولية التي تربط بين مقاطع النص الواحد- كما عرّفها جون ميشال آدم- خاصة في الحالة التي يكون فيها النص متكوناً من مقاطع من مختلف الأنماط: سردية، وصفية، تفسيرية، حجاجية وحوارية، مستغلين في ذلك بعض الدراسات الغربية وكذا العربية القديمة. ومن خلال تحليل المدونات المختارة وبالتركيز على البنية المقطعية للنصوص توصلنا إلى إمكانية دراسة انسجام النصوص بين وحدات تفوق الجملة وهي المقاطع، كما توصلنا إلى بعض مظاهر الانسجام في هذا النوع من النصوص (اللامتجانسة تركيبياً) والمتمثلة في بعض العلاقات الدلالية كالتكرار بأنواعه المختلفة والتطابق الذاتي وعلاقات الجزء بالكل والخاص بالعام والعكس وغيرها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الانسجام، العلاقات الدلالية، البنية المقطعية، النمط النصي، اللاتجانس النصي، مخططات التنظيم النصي

## **1-Introduction**

Linguistic studies have worked on the text level since the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and researches in text linguistics increased because sentence linguistics was unable to explain some linguistic phenomena which exceeds the sentence limits; such as, the syntactic and the semantic relations between sentences, that is cohesion and coherence, adding to that the pragmatic function of the text which depends on the context and thus allows to know the writer/ speaker's intention, that is why it was necessary to head to analyze a unit bigger than the sentence.

Sentences in the text are organized in different forms called textual organization plans such as periods, chains, sequential structure...which allow studying text coherence and even cohesion using a unit bigger than the sentence, which is a typed sequence of sentences. Therefore, the text can be defined as a number of sequences (seq n) linked together grammatically and semantically (Adam 1990, 84). In this paper I want to deal with the text as a sequential structure including homogeneous or heterogeneous sequences (sequences of different types: narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository and conversational). The aim of this paper is to study coherence in sample heterogeneous texts through the study of the semantic relations between its typed sequences. I chose two texts: '*why birds sing at dawn*', a folktale story and an extract from Achebe's '*Things fall apart*'. Thus, the problematic of this paper: how is coherence realized in heterogeneous texts? And what are the possible semantic relations linking the text sequences?

The research followed a linguistic analysis based on a theoretical study of Van Dijk, Hoey and some ancient Arabic studies and is based on Adam's definition of text and the concept of sequential structure.

## **2-The research theoretical frame work:**

Text linguistics is interested in the text as a topic of study, and aims to seek for the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic relations between the sentences which constitute the text, and as it was difficult to define the sentence, different attempts were to give a conventional definition to the text. Some definitions relied on the text successive

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components, while others took into consideration connection between its sentences or focused on the communicative aspect and relation with the context; as a result, many definitions were given to the text, the thing which helped to give an image closer to its features.

Harris for example, in his article *discourse analysis* (1952, French copy 1969 ,8), spoke about a unit larger than a sentence, he calls it sometimes successive utterances and sometimes discourse whether it is spoken or written.

Ewald Lung in his turn published an article in 1972, titled *When is a text grammar more adequate than a sentence grammar?* where he distinguished between the sentence and the text and found that the text has specific characteristics like disambiguity of its sentences and the possibility to be paraphrased or summarized (Lang 1972, 78), which means that he eliminated the idea of sentences succession, which was introduced by Harris.

Haliday and Hasan focused on the semantic unit of the text, they meant the unity of meaning in context. According to them the semantic unity of the text lies in the cohesion among the sentences of which it is composed (1976, 293).

Jean-Michel Adam considered the text as a cohesive and coherent sequence of utterances which grows to an end (Adam 1990, 46-49), a definition which corresponds to most linguists' definitions. Adam also suggested to study texts using another unit of analysis bigger than the sentence and period, which is the typed sequence (1997:665). So, the text according to Adam is composed of a number of sequences related to each other grammatically and semantically, it is a sequential structure which allows determining the text's type (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative and conversational) (Adam, 1990:84). The sequence is the unit of text analysis, it is a structure which has its internal organization and is dependent or not from the whole to which it belongs (1990:84), it is one of text organization plans suggested first by Charolles (1988), which were later reformulated by Jean-Michel Adam, who spoke about six plans of textual organization: chains, period, sequential structure, segmentation, polyphony phenomena (1990: 52-142) and the pragmatic orientation of the text (1996: 32).

The text components are organized hierarchically: sequences which are composed of macro proposition, which contain in their turn micro proposition(s) (Adam 2005b, 15).

[Text [sequence [macro proposition(s) [micro proposition(s)] ] ] ]

According to what is said above, a text may contain one sequence or a number of either homogeneous sequences or heterogeneous sequences (Adam, 2011: 52-53) as it is shown in the following diagram :

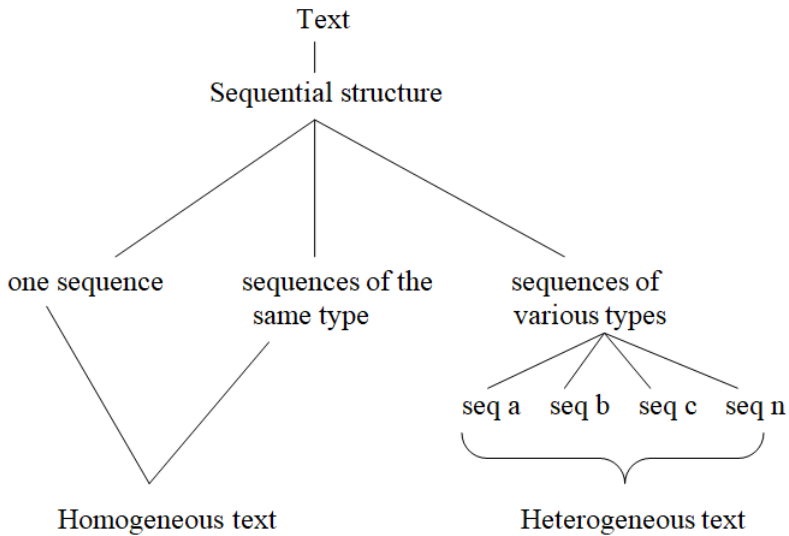


Figure1: Text sequential structure in both cases: homogeneity and heterogeneity.

Adam distinguishes six types of sequential structures: narrative, descriptive, instructive, argumentative, expository and conversational. Each one has its characteristics (Adam: 1990, 87-101, Werlich: 1976, 21).

- **Narrative sequential structure:**

This type was much known in ancient rhetorics and poetics. Narration is known by a succession of events, the sequence includes sentences related to each other to form a unit which grows to an end. The presented successive events should deal with human experiences, even if characters are animals like in fibula, they should be anthropomorphic to

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include the human interest (Adam 1994,94). Events can happen in their natural order, or distorted through anachronies, they grow to make the plot where the characters interact and lead the story to the end. Events, characters, time chronology, the plot and the topic of the story are narration components, Adam added to these the moral lesson behind the story, which is the speech act of the discourse whether it is implicit or explicit( Adam 2005a, 191).

- **Descriptive sequential structure:**

It represents arrangements which are not put in a linear and causal order. They are realized by a structure of available lexis including adjectives and adverbs. This type of sequential structures is produced generally in ordinary discursive activities like the Media, advertisement..., as it can be inserted in a narrative text to give the story the illusion of being real (Adam and Petitjean 1989,37).

- **Instructive sequential structure:**

It is also called procedural. The cognitive activity behind this type is the speaker's ability to make plans. An instructive discourse is characterized by a logical or chronological succession of basic units in a future instructive operation or activity which recommends the hearer to follow the given indications. This type of discourse includes rules of games, texts of laws, recipes, pieces of advice...

- **Argumentative sequential structure:**

This type of sequential structure aims either to defend or refute a thesis or an opinion. It starts with premises which are supposed to be strong and indisputable. The conclusion follows the premises; either supports the thesis or denies the adversary's view. We differentiate here between the argumentative sequential structure and the argumentative tendency which characterizes all texts, which is, writers' aims to convince readers that something is true whatever the text type is descriptive or narrative... (Charaudeau and Maingueneau 2002, 67).

- **Expository sequential structure:**

It aims to provide information about the topic of the text and explains them. It is generally associated with conceptual representation and analysis. It answers a question with Why or How. The writer should be neutral, so he should avoid using the first personal pronoun.

- **Conversational sequential structure:**

Dialogues and conversations are successions of linguistic exchanges between two persons or more, the conversational sequential structure then, is “a hierarchical succession of structures called conversational exchanges” (Adam 1990, 89). This type includes telephone conversation, everyday verbal conversation, dialogues in plays, novels and short stories, messages...

The concept of sequential structure helps to determine the text type; Adam, proposes to deal with sequence type instead of text type which seems a very vast concept. The complex nature of the text and the scarcity of homogeneous texts or mono sequential texts lead us to deal with a smaller unit which is the sequence so as to determine the text type, Adam focused on the text form and sometimes content in order to classify the text. He found that the text type is in fact the type of the dominant sequence (2005b:7), and in case of heterogeneity, we look to the way they are organized in the text and how they are related to form the whole to which they belong .

### **3-The sequential structure in *why birds sing at dawn*:**

The text is composed of two sequences, narrative and expository. The explanatory sequence seems inserting the narrative one, in other words, it is a story framed by explanation. Adam considered *why stories* as explanatory although narration appears dominant in the text (2011,182). An explanatory sequence should contain three parts. The first part introduces the topic and can be a question. In the second part the topic is explained adequately or here the question is answered accordingly. In the last part, the sequence is closed with an evaluation, which is the confirmation of the explanation. Thus, our tale *Why birds sing at dawn*, is classified as explanatory.

The text starts with a *why question* , which introduces the topic of the text. It is the cause which gets birds to sing early in the morning. Narration answered fully this question in its five stages : The initial situation which introduces the place , time and the first state of the characters ( Birds living in the Happy land on a tree, the mother Birdie always sings in the morning), The events and the characters started to



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move making the plot, a problem rose in the forest was lack of water and thus drought, the thing which pushed the mother to go searching for the magic worm that brings rain, this event made the node which lead her children to make a reaction, they sang in the dawn so that their mother could find her way back home, which really happened in the end of the story making the denouement (And rain started falling, eventually; all the birds joined Yellow in song. Mama Birdie found her way back to Happy-Land.)

The story finishes with an evaluation (And from then on, birds sang at dawn), which was in the same time the value of the explanation which generally takes the reader back to the present to benefit from the explanation and the story. Here, Mama Birdie made sacrifice, she went on a mission to save the forest leaving her babies alone. Learning to sing gives them hope she would return and she did, necessity encouraged them to learn singing without any help, and make them able to save their mother.

#### **4- Coherence between Sequences in *why birds sing at dawn* :**

Van Dijk in his book '*Text and Context*' studied the semantic description of coherence in discourse; he dealt with sequences of sentences, and examined the interrelation between sentences or propositions in the same sequence and between sequences. He called a sequence each paragraph in a text dealing with a topic even if they have the same type (1977,95), and although it is not the sequence we mean in our study, we can find some aspects of sequence coherence in his study which can be fruitful in ours.

Van Dijk started from analyzing semantics which he considered relative. A sentence cannot be interpreted isolatedly; a sentence is rather interpreted according to the neighboring sentences. Coherence between sentences or propositions or model structures can be realized if valuations in model A depend on valuations in model B. So, relations which contribute to the coherence of model sequences are: identity, intersection or change of the respective domains of individuals, in addition to quantifiers, properties; relations or the values of predicates. Another important relation helps to make discourse homogeneous; it is cause/ result relationship between facts, as an example (Dijk 1977,96):

An individual is ill and has a fever or calling a doctor, is more homogeneous than being ill and being born in London or having a red hair. In addition to cause- consequence relationship, Van Dijk mentioned other semantic relations such as, inclusion, membership, part of whole, possession and general-particular relationship.

Ancient Arabic studies dealt with coherence in the Quranic text , they considered the whole text as one word (Soyuti 2009,1836) because of being coherent at many levels: sentences, sequences of sentences, Quranic verses and surahs (a number of verses forming a text about a specific topic), and found that parts in the holly book explain/ paraphrase others in the same book.

Quranic researchers concentrated on the semantic relations such as, moving from general to particular and whole- part relationships, it means what was generalized in a paragraph/ verse or even surah, it was explained elsewhere in the text and what was expatiated, it was summarized. (Zarkachi, 1984, ( 2) 315)

They also found that the beginning of the text can have a strong relation with its end through what is called relevance relations such as, sensorial or mental links, which include relations of hearing, seeing, smelling..., and relations of thinking remembering, imagining. Moreover, they include correlations like cause and effect, synonyms, antonyms.... (Zarkachi 1984, (1) 131)

In '*Why birds sing at Dawn*' what makes the text coherent is the relation between the two sequences (the narrative and the explanatory one) which is inclusion; explanation includes the narrative sequence. This last has a complete narrative structure with all its components. Moreover, the text moves from general to particular, which is from a question to details, without forgetting the pragmatic purpose of the text which relates both sequences through the speech act, it is the moral lesson taught in this text which is the aim behind creating it.

We have already mentioned that when Adam defined *the sequence* he mentioned the characteristic of being dependent or independent from the text (1990,84). In the case of our text sequences are interrelated and dependent to each other, so we cannot go without either of them, because

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the answer of the question is included in the narrative sequence, in other words, the two sequences are related by a cause- consequence relationship; the mother birdie left the forest and made sacrifice for the benefit of the forest and its inhabitants, the result was rain; moreover, her children learned singing.

### 5- Coherence in Achebe's *Things fall apart*

In the following example, we will see a case where macro propositions, called *perioles* (Adam, 1990, 142), in a sequence are related and independent from the text. The text chosen is an extract from part one, chapter two of *Thing fall apart*, a novel written by the Nigerian Chinua Achebe... It is a heterogeneous text. It is rather narrative inserting sequences of other types; such as, conversational and descriptive ones. It is impossible to study coherence between its sequences or all its periods in an article. Therefore, I chose to analyze the first narrative sequence-periods which insert a descriptive sequence.

These are: Narrative sequence-period 1: From Okonkwo... to distance.

Descriptive sequence: From the night to... head.

Narrative sequence- period 2: From In the morning to shoulder.

### 5-1- Individual identity:

In addition to the condition of individual identity, Van Dijk also spoke about the condition Range in order to obtain a coherent discourse, predicates or the properties denoted by them must have certain range, which is a set of possible individuals or individual concepts they can be assigned to, and properties of the same individual must have overlapping ranges to be applied to the same individual, for example, the concept *boy* belongs to the range of the property *ill*, having red hair and being ill may have overlapping ranges although they are not directly related, because they belong to different dimensions such as physical appearance (the color here) and health. The relation between model sequences or sentences can occur in respect to the same dimension, color for example and not different dimensions color and shape. Individuals may be compared according to these dimensions being more or less similar or different. (Van Dijk 1977,97)

Sequences can also be linked due to time/ period and place identity, which is preserving the same period and the same place in discourse..(Van Dijk 1977,99)

The first sequence-period is related to the previous sequence(s) by the use of the same individual: Okonkwo, son of Unoka, a brave man who defeated the country against the white men, adding to that the use of pronouns referring to him such as personal, reflexive and possession ones: *he, himself, his*. This individual is related to the concept of the brave, strong and hardworking man whom all people respect. The period also mentions another individual which was not introduced in chapter one of part one of the novel, it is the Ogene, which is the town's crier, who booms the hallow metal to attract people's intention in order to announce a message. This new individual is introduced through Okonkwo's *sense of hearing* (he heard the Ogene of the town...). The Ogene or the town's crier leads to the appearance of another individual through his *voice*; it is the town market place, where people were asked to gather in the morning.

Umofia is another individual mentioned in this same period and introduced previously; it is referred to by the demonstrative '**the town**' and it represents the sample of the strong town where people are judged by their strength. It is also the place where most of the events happened, which is another cause of the text coherence, it is *space identity*, referred to in the descriptive sequence by 'the world' and the nine villages of umofia, and it is *the frame* to which various concepts depend on like 'houses, the market, the clan).

Ogbuefi Ezeugo is a new individual appearing for the first time in the second period of the narrative sequence, which seems incoherent with the previous one (s), because this individual is not mentioned there. In fact he is identified in the descriptive sequence. It is the *place relation* which justifies the creation of this individual, who stood up in the midst of the people gathered in the market place. It is also a *partiality relation*, exactly, it is a *membership* relation; Ogbuefo Ezeugo is a member in the clan and has his function and importance.

The descriptive sequence introduces a new individual, mentioned previously in the first chapter by his name: Unoka. He is Okonwo's

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father, who appears through a *possession* relation *his* father, in a sort of comparison between the father and the son.

### 5-2- Determined words

Some words are used with determiners in the second reference creating coherence between the narrative and the descriptive sequences. The word *night* for example, which is mentioned in the narrative sequence- period, is the theme of the following descriptive sequence where it is used with determiner '*the* night' and demonstrative '*this*' (this particular night). Moreover, the two sequences are linked with demonstrative '*these*' in the descriptive sequence (these people) which is referred to in the first narrative-period by (every man in Umofia).

### 5-3- Moving from general to particular and whole – part relationship

In the first narrative sequence- period the word 'night' is mentioned and details about it are given in the following sequence through description (night in Umofia was quiet, darkness held a vague of terror, all people were afraid, children were warned not to whistle, wild animals...).

The descriptive sequence is also related to both the first and the second narrative periods thanks to *part-whole* relation represented in the relation between Umofia, the town and the market place which is part of Umofia, the place where people would gather to listen to the news.

Sequences can also be linked thanks to time/ period and place identity, which is preserving the same period and the same place in discourse..( Van Dijk 1977,99)

Umofia is the place where most of the events happened in the novel, so there is *homogeneity of place*, a very strong coherence tool. Next to place, there is *logic in time* in this extract, for example, '*night*' and '*bed*' in the first narrative sequence- period, '*night, moonlight, quiet, the dark, silence*' in the descriptive sequence and '*the morning*' in the second narrative sequence- period, which form all together a homogeneous *series in normal worlds*.

### 5-4- Repetition

Hoey considered repetition, in its different types, as the governing principle which forms the matching patterns of texts (1983,107). In this sense, repetition can be explored to link sequences of different types in any text. He mentioned simple and complex lexical repetition, simple partial and mutual and also complex paraphrase, substitution, co-reference and ellipsis.

The text can also contain repetition of the same meaning with different words which is called paraphrasing and repetition of words with meanings which is synonyms. Another kind of repetition concerns the use of identical sentences more than once, or it is repetition of the same sentence structure but with the use of different words (Younis 2014, 209-215), for example, If conditional clauses.

There is *simple lexical repetition* of the words '**night, Umofia, silence, occasion and the market place**' which are used in the first narrative sequence-period and reiterated in the descriptive sequence and in the second narrative sequence- period. Repetition then, strengthens the link between both sequences/ periods and helps the reader to feel the text relevance and continuity.

We can also find a *complex lexical repetition* concerning the items: '**silent**' (in the descriptive sequence) and '**silence**' (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> narrative-period), the words belong to different grammatical class. They relate the different parts of the text where they were used.

What is observable in our extract is the strong relation between the two periods of the narrative sequence represented in time and place unity, individual identities and the reason why people were asked to gather in the market place tomorrow. All these prove the independence of each sequence, the narrative and the descriptive ones from the other; it means, we can exclude the descriptive sequence which is the inserted one without making any disorder or rupture in the succession of events or the logic of the stor

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## 6-Conclusion

The current study is an attempt to study coherence in heterogeneous texts using the sequence which is a unit bigger than a sentence, we have exploited some semantic relations such as cause- effect, whole- particular relations, moving from general to specific, repetition, individual identities..., which are related to our corpus. It depends on the text itself; each text has its own characteristics, it is the role of the reader/ researcher to discover the semantic relations in his text and reveals its coherence.

The sequences in a text can also be related by the macro speech act which is the pragmatic relation or the writer's intention resulting from the relation between the text and its context. The speech act can be implicit or explicit.

Coherence between typed sequences allows surpassing the linearity of text components, here successive sentences, to analyze successive as well as non successive sequences of different types, it means, it is very possible to study the semantic relation between the first and the last sequences/ periods of a text.

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